

CONFERENCE DRAFT 20030313
DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGING OF RARE MATERIALS
A Statement of Objectives and Principles

This statement grows out of deliberations of the Bibliographic Standards Committee of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries and the work of a special conference on DCRM hosted by the Beinecke Library at Yale University, March 10-13, 2003.

Purpose

Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules appropriately assume the need for specialized rules to address needs of special materials or audiences. [Note 1] The sets of rules included under the rubric of *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials* (DCRM) seek to address situations rare materials catalogers face in their effort to describe materials in ways that adequately meet the specialized requirements of their users. [Note 2] Such rules differ in matters of emphasis and degree as we seek to meet user requirements and cover characteristics of material that differ from those met/covered by general rules such as AACR2.

Scope

Since 1998, the Bibliographic Standards Committee (BSC) of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries has been considering revisions to the *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Books* (DCRB), a manual that focused particularly, though not exclusively, on books printed before 1801. Recognizing a broader user audience than that concerned solely with pre-1801 printed books, BSC has actively encouraged and assisted a variety of efforts dealing with cataloging guidelines for other printed and manuscript materials. In the manner of ISBD, or the various chapters of AACR2, we consider it logical to group these together under the title *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials*. The several formats will be issued separately. At this time significant work is underway in the specific formats of books (taking into consideration requirements of users of books produced after 1800 as well as earlier materials), serials, and music. Related guidelines for early manuscript material are in press and the map cataloging community has begun to enhance guidance to those cataloging rare maps in its general guidelines.[Note 3]. Thus, DCRM concerns itself with the universe of the printed, tangible, eye-readable artifacts in our collections. It does so from a bibliographic rather than archival perspective. [Note 4] Users of these materials study them from a variety of perspectives that require information that goes beyond the intellectual (textual or visual) content of the materials.

Background

In 1981 the Library of Congress (LC) issued the first set of AACR2-related rules for rare materials under the title *Bibliographic Description of Rare Books* (BDRB). This manual, designed primarily for its own catalogers, intended to respond to the expressed needs of those outside the who catalog rare materials. Ten years later, LC's Cataloging Distribution

Service issued a new edition (the above-mentioned DCRB). The BSC collaborated with LC in this new edition. A growing body of experience in applying the rules, research, and discussion, had helped stimulate this revision. A further catalyst was the circulation of drafts of a revised edition of *ISBD(A): International Standard Bibliographic Description for Older Monographic Publications (Antiquarian)*. DCRB acknowledged AACR2 as its parent code and in cases of divergence between AACR2 and ISBD(A) generally followed AACR2 more closely.[Note 5] Both BDRB and DCRB focused particularly on books printed before 1801, though DCRB began to expand the parameters of its treatment.

Today we work in environments that, thanks in part to the groundwork of BDRB and DCRB, share a more uniform understanding and practice of cataloging rare materials than was true two decades ago. Regardless of age, content or carrier of the item described, today's cataloging descriptions usually reside in a common machine-readable format further enhancing that uniformity. Recent theoretical work helps us recognize that rare materials cataloging rules can and should grow out of the same principles governing general cataloging rules. Of particular value are the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions' *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records* (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1998) (FRBR) that help us consider both what we are describing and why. Elaine Svenonius's *The Intellectual Foundation of Information Organization* (Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 2000), synthesizes and rearticulates principles that have shaped current Anglo-American cataloging practice and in the process elucidates aspects of FRBR.[Note 6] In both these works we find ways to more clearly articulate the purpose and nature of specialized cataloging for rare materials.

Objectives for rare materials cataloging: meeting user requirements

The primary objectives of rare materials cataloging are no different than the primary objectives of general cataloging. FRBR identifies those objectives as to meet user requirements to find, identify, select, and acquire/obtain materials.[Note 7] Although we share these objectives with all other cataloging, our users bring specialized needs to these tasks. In addition, some material that we describe, especially older material, does not conform to assumptions of standard production practices that lie behind general cataloging rules.

1) Users shall be able to distinguish clearly between different manifestations of an expression or work.

In general cataloging practice, one assumes that most manifestations readily distinguish themselves in the edition area and the publication, distribution, etc. area.[Note 8] In working with rare materials, these two areas are also critical to user tasks of identifying and selecting, but abbreviated transcription of information, especially in the publication, distribution, etc. area can impede these tasks. Additionally, information in the physical description and (where relevant) series areas may be critical when distinguishing manifestations. Transcriptions in the title and statement of responsibility area also provide information that distinguishes manifestations much more frequently than is routine in general materials. The two latter areas assume even greater importance in the absence of

(or presence of minimal or misleading information in) either the edition area and/or the publication, distribution, etc. area. On occasion, further description in the note area of various anomalies serves to distinguish among otherwise unidentifiable manifestations. Any of these areas may also contribute at times to the ability of users to distinguish among exemplars at the item level.

2) Users shall be able to perform most identification and selection tasks independently of direct access to the materials.

Users of rare materials cataloging frequently perform identification and selection tasks under circumstances that require the bibliographic record to stand as a detailed surrogate for the item (e.g. consultation from a distance, limited access due to condition of item, inability to physically browse collections housed in restricted areas). Accuracy of bibliographic representation increases subsequent efficiency for both users and collection managers. The same accuracy contributes to the long-term preservation of the materials themselves, e.g. by reducing unnecessary circulation of materials that do not specifically meet the user's requirements.

3) Users shall be able to investigate physical processes and post-production history and context exemplified in materials described.

Much of general cataloging assumes that users search within the work-expression-manifestation hierarchy. [Note 9] In contrast, users of rare materials routinely investigate a variety of artifactual or post-production intellectual aspects of materials that encompass a range of items or manifestations that are unrelated to each other as expressions or works. For example, they attempt to locate sets of materials related by printing methods, binding, provenance, etc. Additionally, users search for items by genre, whether physical or intellectual. Such access depends on full and accurate descriptions and corresponding access points.

4) Users shall be able to access materials whose production or presentation characteristics deviate from modern conventions.

General cataloging codes routinely distinguish between manifestations through reliance on explicit evidence presented in conventional form (e.g. a formal edition statement) that may be lacking or insufficient to distinguish among different manifestations in rare materials. In rare materials, that which is bibliographically significant is often unfamiliar to modern users. [Note 10]

Principles for rare materials cataloging rules

Having identified several objectives of rare materials users, we want also to articulate working principles to guide the construction and revision of rules. Adherence to these principles in rule construction should facilitate meeting the user objectives. We derive these specific principles from reflection on the general principles of bibliographic description offered by Svenonius.[Note 11] Throughout these principles “DCRM rules” refers to any of the format-specific components encompassed by DCRM, e.g. DCRM(B) for books, DCRM(S) for serials, DCRM(Music) for music.

a) DCRM rules shall provide guidance for descriptions that allow users to distinguish clearly between different manifestations of an expression or work.

This relates to user objective 1 stated above. It derives particularly from the general principle of user convenience and has implications throughout the descriptive record, especially in the edition and publication/distribution areas. The principle enables distinguishing among items as well as manifestations.

b) DCRM rules shall provide for accurate representations of the entity as it describes itself, notably through instructions regarding transcription, transposition, and omission.

This relates to user objectives 2 and 4 stated above. It derives particularly from the general principles of representation (with its related subprinciple of accuracy) and of standardization. Precise representation is of particular relevance in the title and statement of responsibility area, the edition area, the publication, distribution, etc. area, and the series area, but should not be ignored in the physical description and note areas. Svenonius's statement on accuracy (p. 71) is worth repeating in the context of DCRM: "A description is inaccurate if it in any way misrepresents an entity, making it seem what is not." The principles of representing material in the way in which it presents itself, and of presenting it in a standardized fashion, stand in greater tension with each other for rare materials than is the case with general materials. Faithfulness to both principles may require both descriptive and annotative treatment necessarily exceeding the norms (and at times the vocabulary) established as sufficient for description of general materials.

c) DCRM rules shall provide guidance for the inclusion of manifestation- specific and item-specific information that permits users to investigate physical process and post-production history and context exemplified in the item described.

This relates to user objective 3 stated above. It derives particularly from the general principles of sufficiency and necessity and the related subprinciple of significance. Application of the principle requires that rare materials cataloging rules provide additional guidance on access points, particularly in cases where such information is not integral to the manifestation, expression or work described. Rules for item-specific information appearing in the note area may prescribe standard forms for presentation of information (addressing general principles of user convenience and common usage). Application of such rules

presumes both a user's need for such information and a cataloger's ability to properly describe such aspects.

d) DCRM rules shall provide for the inclusion of all elements of bibliographical significance.

This is related to all of the user objectives stated above. General cataloging rules routinely strive for both brevity and clarity, principles affiliated with the general principle of sufficiency. In describing rare materials, too great an emphasis on brevity may become the occasion for insufficiency and lack of clarity. In rare materials cataloging, brevity of description may be measured best against the functional requirements of the particular bibliographic record rather than against the average physical length of other bibliographic records in a given catalog or database. The tension between rules for rare materials that promote accurate representation of an item and yet do not exceed the requirements of sufficiency is great. Reference to the principle of user convenience may offer correct resolution of such tensions.

e) DCRM rules shall conform to the structure and language of the latest revision of AACR2 to the extent possible; ISBD shall serve as a secondary reference point for equivalent components of DCRM (e.g. ISBD(A) for DCRM(B)).

This principle relates to general principles of both standardization and user convenience/common usage. We assume that users of rare materials cataloging also operate in contexts where AACR2 is a norm for general cataloging. In addition we note that the cataloging community within which DCRM is developing has a strong association with AACR2 as interpreted and applied by the Library of Congress. DCRM uses existing AACR2 vocabulary in a manner consistent with AACR2 usage/definition; use of additional or specialized vocabulary necessary for description and access of rare materials will occur in a clear and consistent manner in DCRM rules, appendices, and glossaries. DCRM shall not introduce rules that are not required by differences expected between rare and general materials. Numbering of areas within DCRM will conform to the structure of ISBD as implemented in AACR2. When an existing AACR2 rule satisfies the requirements of cataloging rare materials, DCRM shall include AACR2 text verbatim (revising examples as useful for illustration). In cases where the language of AACR2 is not precise enough to cover necessary distinctions or may introduce confusion when dealing with rare materials, DCRM shall carefully consider alternate wording. Relevant components of ISBD are useful references when considering deviation.

f) DCRM rules shall be compatible with relevant prior codes (e.g. DCRM(B) to DCRB) except in cases where changes are necessary to align more closely to current revisions of AACR2 or to conform to the above principles.

This principle also relates to general principles of both standardization and user convenience/common usage. Changes to existing cataloging practices should not be made without careful consideration of the value or necessity of such changes.[Note 12]

Conclusion

This document does not pretend to cover comprehensively the requirements of all users of rare materials or offer answers to each question that will arise in the development of DCRM's component parts. We have tried to highlight broadly applicable user requirements and sketch out significant principles to inform the development and application of rare materials cataloging rules.

DCRM Conference, Beinecke Library, Yale University, March 13, 2003

Working Group 1: General Principles

Jackie M. Dooley, University of California, Irvine, working group moderator

Joe Springer, Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen College, principal drafter

John Attig, Pennsylvania State University

Laurence S. Creider, New Mexico State University

Jain Fletcher, University of California, Los Angeles

Elizabeth L. Johnson, Indiana University

Juliet McLaren, ESTC, University of California, Riverside

Eileen L. Smith, Huntington Library

Laura Stalker, Huntington Library

Suzy Taraba, Wesleyan University

Deborah J. Leslie, Folger Shakespeare Library, conference convener

[Note 1] Cf. AACR2 0.1. Throughout this paper, AACR2 refers to the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, 2nd edition (including, as appropriate in context, all subsequent revisions).

[Note 2] In the context of this document we use the term “rare materials” in a generic sense to encompass whatever library materials institutions or individuals have chosen to distinguish from general library collections by the way they house, preserve, or collect the materials. Rarity in a literal sense may or may not be a feature of these materials. Either the immediate purpose of their inclusion or the eventual result of their retention in a particular collection distinguishes the interest of the collecting agency or individual from that which may have motivated a general library collection to acquire the same materials.

[Note 3] Cite *Descriptive Cataloging of Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, and Early-Modern Manuscripts* (AMREMM) and rare materials content in *Cartographic Materials: A Manual of Interpretation for AACR2*

[Note 4] Examples of archival standards (not part of DCRM) are [cite] APPM, ISAD(G). Refer also to the Canadian-U.S. Task Force on Archival Description (CUSTARD Project) that is working to reconcile APPM, the Canadian Rules for Archival Description, and ISAD (G).

[Note 5] We should note that ISBD(A) is a standard rather than a cataloging code per se. AACR2, a cataloging code, inevitably provides closer models for rule formulation.

[Note 6] Svenonius’ elaboration of the principles of bibliographic description is especially valuable in the work of constructing rules (cf. her chapter 5, pp. 67-85). She notes general design principles of sufficient reason and of parsimony before elaborating on the principles specific to the design of a bibliographic language. Those specific principles are: principle of user convenience (with subprinciple of common usage), principle of representation (with subprinciple of accuracy), principle of sufficiency and necessity (with subprinciple of significance), principle of standardization, and principle of integration.

[Note 7] Svenonius (pp. 18-20) comments on these tasks, rearticulating the “to find” task as “to locate”—including the ability to find a singular entity and to locate any of various sets of entities. In addition she adds a fifth task: “to navigate a bibliographic database.” Users achieve navigation largely through a catalog’s provision of access points and authority control. DCRM’s predecessors have not addressed authority practices, assuming that controlled forms of names will conform to those established according to nationally-established guidelines (e.g. AACR2/NACO). When guidelines for controlled forms of access have not covered specialized needs of rare materials cataloging, catalogers have addressed the issues through existing authority channels. A recent example is the expansion of the Library of Congress Rule Interpretation for AACR2 Rule 22.2 to provide instruction on establishing names for printers’ widows. Rahmatollah Fattahi reportedly would have proposed another user task: to manage or administer (cf. Patrick Le Boeuf “FRBR and Further” *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* Vol. 32(4) 2001, pp. 22-23. Although some management-related data occurs in descriptive cataloging records (e.g.

notes on item imperfections), much of the data pertinent to such tasks is housed in MARC fields (e.g. 506/540 restrictions on access, 583 conservation treatment or needs, 585 exhibition history) not covered by descriptive cataloging rules. CONSER guidelines integrate significant management-related data throughout the areas of the descriptive record.

[Note 8] In FRBR the term “manifestation” has a specific meaning. Please consult the text of FRBR for a full understanding of the terms (available online at: <http://www.ifla.org/VII/s13/frbr/frbr.pdf>.) Briefly, FRBR’s framework for relating the data that are recorded in bibliographic records to the needs of the users of those records identifies three groups of entities: 1) entities that are the products of intellectual or artistic endeavor; 2) entities responsible for the intellectual or artistic content, the physical production and dissemination or custodianship of such products, and 3) entities that are the subjects of intellectual or artistic endeavor. Although the entities of all three groups are significant in the bibliographic record, descriptive cataloging concerns itself most immediately with entities of the first group. FRBR includes four entities in that first group: *work* (e.g. Copernicus's *De revolutionibus*), *expression* (e.g. the Latin text of *De revolutionibus* or C.L. Menzzer's German translation thereof), *manifestation* (e.g. the 1543 Nuremberg ed. of the Latin text or the 1879 Thorn ed. of Menzzer's translation of *De revolutionibus*), and *item* (e.g. Saxonius's copy of the 1543 ed. in the Beinecke Library or the Mudd Library's copy of the 1879 ed. of *De revolutionibus*.) Rare materials cataloging most often occupies itself with entities that are the products of intellectual or artistic endeavor and within that, entities at the manifestation and item levels.

[Note 9] See note 8 above for a brief explanation of the FRBR terminology of work, expression, manifestation, and item. For a fuller understanding of this terminology, consult FRBR itself.

[Note 10] Development of cataloging rules for rare materials in various formats will assist cataloging agencies in providing access to collections whose nature presents obstacles that general cataloging codes have not overcome.

[Note 11] See note 6 above. Though AACR2 itself currently does not provide an explicit statement of underlying principles, the Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR (JSC) has been working toward inclusion of such a statement for several years. Svenonius's articulation of principles has been part of JSC's discussions (cf.: <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/jsc/prin.html>). JSC continues vigorous work in this area, but as of March 2003 has not announced a specific date for completing a statement of principles.

[Note 12] Among the recommendations that guided the process that revised BDRB into DCRB were: “That substantive rule changes be made to increase faithfulness to the object. ...;” “That conventions for transcription from the title page ... be made consistent among the various areas;” and “That the options relating to transcription be eliminated, with the goal of greater predictability among records.” (Cf. Laura Stalker and Jackie M. Dooley, “Descriptive Cataloging and Rare Books” *Rare Books & Manuscripts Librarianship* 7 (1992):1, p. 18.